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ABSTRACT

This report presents study results from a 1988 survey of institutions of higher education (N=1,164 responses) who have instituted freshman seminar programs. Specifically, the survey sought to determine the extent to which colleges and universities were offering a freshman seminar course, defined by the survey instrument as a special course for freshmen, that can be defined as covering survival skills, study skills, freshman orientation, student success, and coping with college level courses. Study results are provided concerning the descriptions of freshman seminars. Other survey findings are reported by institutional size, type, and across all institutions within the following categories: (1) freshman seminar content; (2) faculty/staff development programs for freshman seminar instructors; (3) availability of training programs for freshman seminar instructors; (4) training programs required for freshman seminar instructors; (5) length of faculty/staff development programs; and (6) descriptions of freshman seminar instructors by all institutions, type, and size. Highlights of the survey results are presented as well as conclusions and recommendations. Contains one reference. (GLR)

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Monograph Series
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First National Survey on Freshman Seminar Programs: Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

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National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience
University of South Carolina
1991

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The authors express appreciation to John N. Gardner for his vision and support of this research. Gratitude is also expressed to Raymond O. Murphy, who launched the project, to Cecilia Farach and Ruth Lambert of the Computer Services Division at the University of South Carolina, to Robert Launer and Donald Hoover for statistical consultation, to Trudy Gilkey for typing, and to the following colleagues at the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience for their assistance, without which this project would never have been completed: Mary Hendrix, Rachel Few Stokes, Betsy Barefoot, Beverly Windham, and Kelley McDonald.

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PREFACE

It is with a spirit of real excitement that I convey a few thoughts to launch readers into this important and latest monograph from the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience. The year 1988 was the 100th anniversary of the freshman seminar in American higher education. The first freshman seminar was offered in 1888 at Boston College, but it was not a course for academic credit. Credit-bearing freshman seminars have been offered since 1911 when one was begun at Reed College. This phenomenon has waxed and waned for much of the 20th century at hundreds of American post-secondary institutions. However, prior to the publication of this monograph, there has been no comprehensive research data on the many salient characteristics and features of this unique curricular innovation.

Most observers of the recent reform movement which has focused so intensely on undergraduate education would conclude that a significant contributing factor has been the freshman seminar concept. It has been our privilege here at the University of South Carolina to be in the vanguard of hundreds of institutions which have initiated, refined, and institutionalized freshman seminars over this period. Nevertheless, some institutions are still in the process of considering whether or not to develop freshman seminars or are still struggling to move them from pilot to permanent status. My colleagues and I in the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience are constantly queried by educators seeking more assistance, more data, more information, more encouragement, and more counsel on the concept of the freshman seminar. It is towards this end that we devote this publication.

This particular monograph is the result of a survey that was conducted in 1988. I am extremely hopeful that this information will help you in your own institutional setting, whatever your connections to the freshman seminar, as much as it has helped me increase my own knowledge of a concept with which I have been involved since 1972.

Quite unobjectively, I thought before reading the final results of this survey that I knew a great deal about the freshman seminar course. But my own knowledge has been significantly enriched as a result of the work of my colleagues here at the University of South Carolina who produced this research. Perhaps you may wish to write or call us with questions as to how you might apply this information to your own unique institutional setting. If you would like to do so, we would be happy to hear from you. You may write us at University 101, 1728 College Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29208, or call us at (803) 777-6029.

In the meantime, I thank you for your support of our research and dissemination activities through your acquisition of this monograph, and I wish you all the best with freshman programming on your campus. I know that your students will be well served as a result of your work.

August 1991

John N. Gardner
Columbia, SC

First National Survey on Freshman Seminar Programs: Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Paul P. Fidler
Dorothy S. Fidler

The National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience surveyed institutions of higher education throughout the United States in Fall 1988 to collect data on freshman seminar programs. Specifically, the survey sought to determine the extent to which colleges and universities were offering a freshman seminar course, defined by the survey instrument as a "special course for freshmen" that can be defined as a survival, study skills, freshman orientation, student success, or "coping with college" type course.

METHOD

The national survey was mailed in Fall 1988 to the chief academic officers of 3,168 two- and four-year colleges in the United States. A cover letter accompanying the survey requested that the questionnaire be routed to the person responsible for freshman programming on each campus for completion. Completed questionnaires were received from 1,699 institutions of which 1,164 or 68.5% reported that a freshman seminar course was offered. It is assumed that nonrespondents are less likely to have freshman seminar courses on their campuses.

Survey data included information descriptive of the institutions offering seminars, the course itself, and associated faculty/staff development programs. The results will be presented by the following broad categories: description of course, content of course, and related faculty/staff development programs. Chi-square analyses were conducted by type of institution and by undergraduate enrollment on the following variables:

- ✓ coordinating responsibility
- ✓ content responsibility
- ✓ program longevity
- ✓ course length
- ✓ course credit
- ✓ elective credit versus required credit
- ✓ method of grading
- ✓ course required
- ✓ frequency offered
- ✓ number of sections
- ✓ enrollments per term
- ✓ section size
- ✓ organizational relationships
- ✓ fiscal support
- ✓ retention results
- ✓ availability of research

RESULTS

The results on freshman seminars are presented in three parts: general description, course content, and related faculty/staff development programs. In each case, data are presented across all institutions and by type and size of institution. Chi-square analyses were conducted on each survey item by type of institution (public four-year, private four-year, two-year, and other) and by size of institution (less than 1,000; from 1,000 to 5,000; from 5,001 to 10,000; and over 10,000).

Description of Freshman Seminars

The data presented in this section describe freshman seminars according to the variables listed above. Percentages of colleges and universities reporting on each of these variables are presented in the following three ways: (a) across all institutions, (b) by type of institution, and (c) by size of institution.

Frequency of Freshman Seminar Course Offerings

Frequency of Freshman Seminar Course Offerings Across All Institutions. Approximately two of every three institutions responding to the survey offer a freshman seminar (see Figure 1).

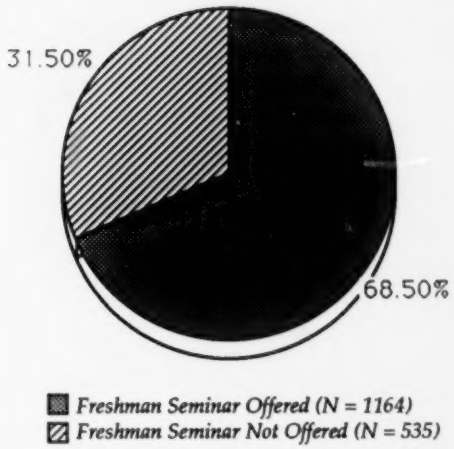

Figure 1. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Availability of Freshman Seminar (*N* = 1699).

Frequency of Freshman Seminar Course Offerings by Type of Institution. Figure 2 shows that institutions are amazingly similar by type in the degree to which they offered freshman seminars. Approximately 69% of public four-year, private four-year, and two-year institutions offer the seminar. A slightly smaller percentage of other institutions (62.7%) offer the course.

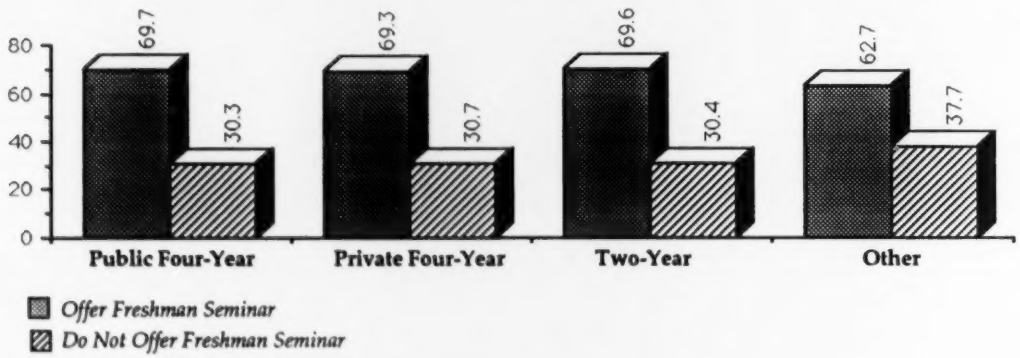

Figure 2. Percentage of Institutions by Type Offering Freshman Seminars (*N* = 1691)

Frequency of Freshman Seminar Course Offerings by Size of Institution. Institutions were also similar in their offering of the seminar by size. Figure 3 shows that about 70% of all institutions over 1,000 students offer seminars, while 66.8% of smaller institutions (less than 1,000) offer the course.

Coordinating Responsibility

Coordinating Responsibility Across All Institutions. Across all institutions, faculty who taught a freshman seminar had primary responsibility for coordinating the course in 57.1% of institutions surveyed (see Figure 4). Coordination responsibility was held by academic administrators in 18.2% of institutions while student affairs administrators and "other" persons were responsible in 16.5% and 8.2% of institutions respectively.

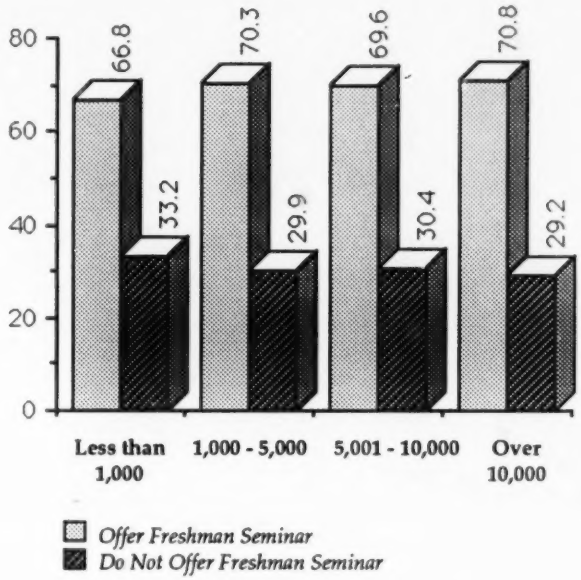

Figure 3. Percentage of Institutions by Size Offering Freshman Seminars (N = 1667).

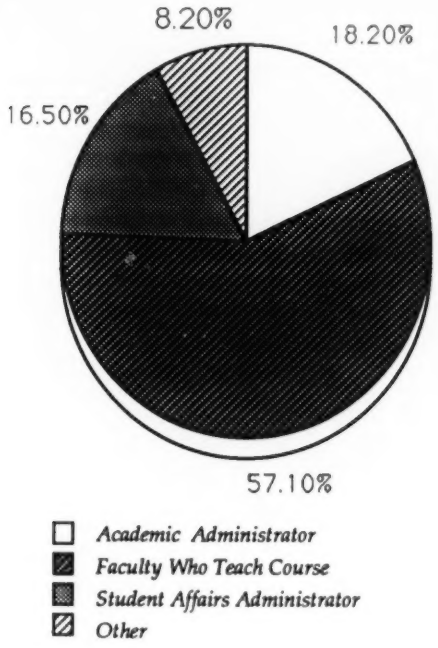

Figure 4. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Primary Coordinating Responsibility for Freshman Seminars (N = 1127)

Coordinating Responsibility By Type of Institution. Figure 5 shows important differences in coordinating responsibility by type of institution. For example, academic administrators were less likely to coordinate the freshman seminar in two-year institutions but were more likely to have such responsibility in other institutions. Similarly, student affairs administrators were less likely to coordinate the course in private four-year campuses, and faculty were less likely to coordinate in public four-year campuses ($p < .05$).

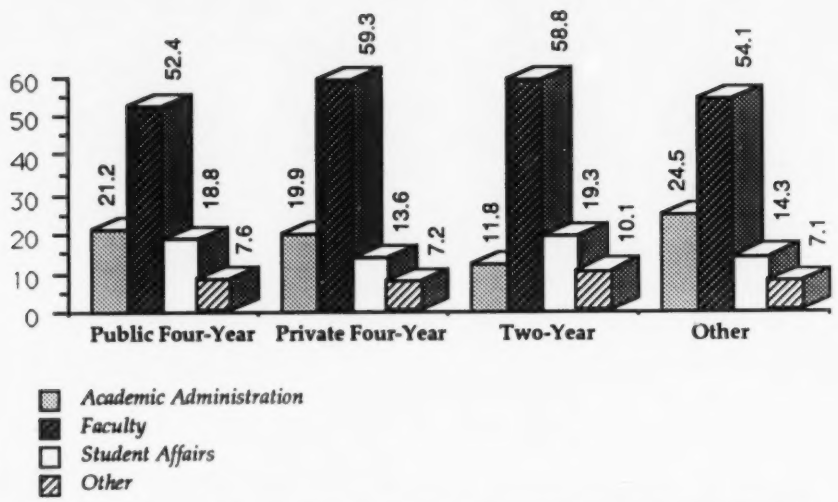

Figure 5. Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Primary Responsibility for Coordinating Freshman Seminars (N = 1127).

Coordinating Responsibility By Size of Institution. Institutions did not differ significantly by size on coordinating responsibility for freshman seminars; therefore, the data in Table 1 do not show any significant differences. However, faculty seemed somewhat less likely to have primary coordinating responsibility for the freshman seminars on large campuses (over 10,000). Rather, academic administrators appeared more likely to coordinate the freshman seminars on large campuses.

Table 1

Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Primary Coordinating Responsibility for Freshman Seminars (N = 1115)

	Academic Administrators	Faculty	Student Affairs	Other
Less Than 1,000	18.1	60.6	14.3	7.1
1,000 - 5,000	17.0	56.8	17.6	8.6
5,001 - 10,000	13.9	59.2	17.7	9.2
Over 10,000	28.3	46.7	15.8	9.2

p = ns

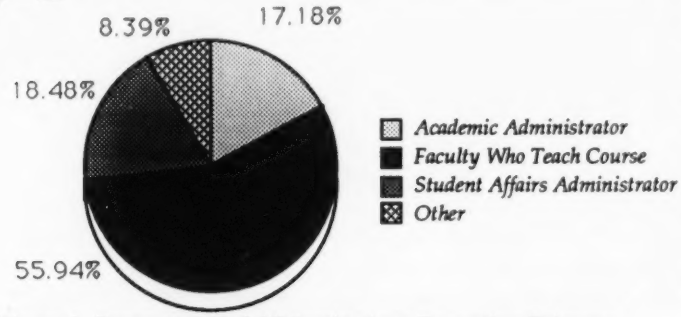

Figure 6. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Primary Content Responsibility for Freshman Seminars (N = 1076).

Content Responsibility

Content Responsibility Across All Institutions. Faculty who taught the course had content responsibility in 55.94% of institutions while this responsibility was held by student affairs administrators, academic administrators, and others in 18.48%, 17.18%, and 8.39% of institutions respectively (Figure 6).

Content Responsibility By Type of Institution. When examined by type of institution, Table 2 shows similar findings for course content responsibility; however, the differences were not significant.

Table 2
Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Primary Content Responsibility for Freshman Seminar (N = 1076)

	Academic Administrators	Faculty	Student Affairs	Other
Public Four-Year	17.5	56.8	16.7	9.0
Private Four-Year	20.8	54.3	18.2	6.8
Two-Year	11.8	58.1	20.2	9.9
Other	18.8	54.2	18.8	8.3

p = ns

Content Responsibility By Size of Institution. When examined by size of institution, no significant differences were obtained (see Table 3); however, student affairs staff seem somewhat more likely to have primary content responsibility on campuses with less than 5,000 students.

Table 3
Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Primary Content Responsibility for Freshman Seminars (N = 1076)

	Academic Administrators	Faculty	Student Affairs	Other
Less Than 1,000	19.1	53.5	20.2	7.2
1,000 - 5,000	15.0	57.0	20.5	7.5
5,001 - 10,000	16.3	59.4	12.2	12.2
Over 10,000	19.8	56.9	12.1	11.2

p = ns

Program Longevity

Program Longevity Across All Institutions. In reporting how long the freshman seminar had been offered on the campus, Figure 7 shows 35.4% of respondents reporting that the course had been offered for more than five years. In 34.5% of cases, the course had been offered for two to five years, while 30.1% reported that the course had been offered for less than two years.

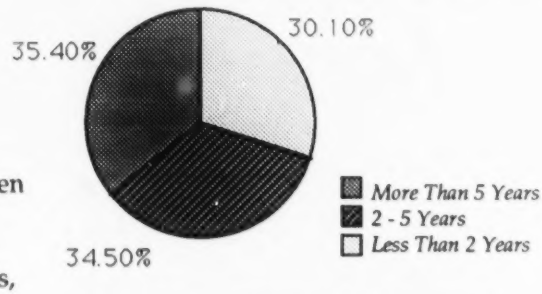

Figure 7. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Length of Time Freshman Seminars Have Been Offered (N = 1104).

Program Longevity By Type of Institution. Figure 8 shows no significant differences between types of institutions in how long freshman seminars have been offered.

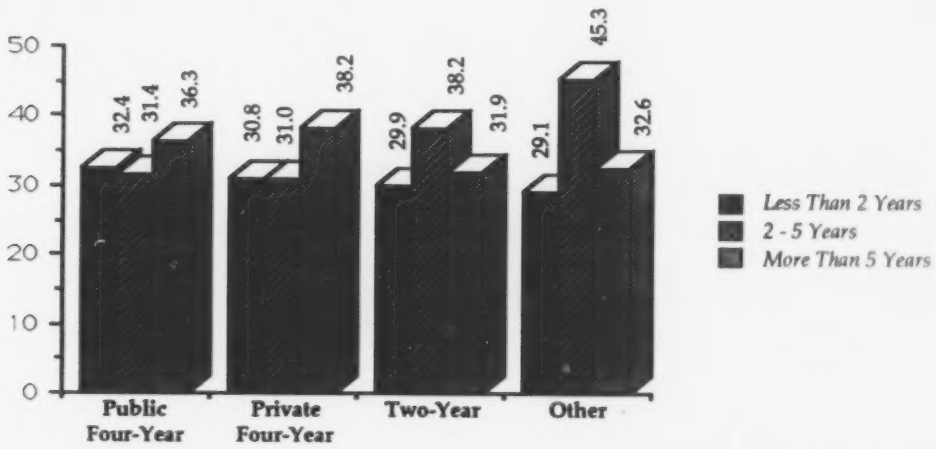

Figure 8. Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Length of Time Freshman Seminar Has Been Offered (*N* = 1104).

Program Longevity By Size of Institution. No significant differences were noted when program longevity was analyzed by size of institution (see Figure 9). In other words, length of time freshman seminars had been offered did not vary significantly according to size of institution.

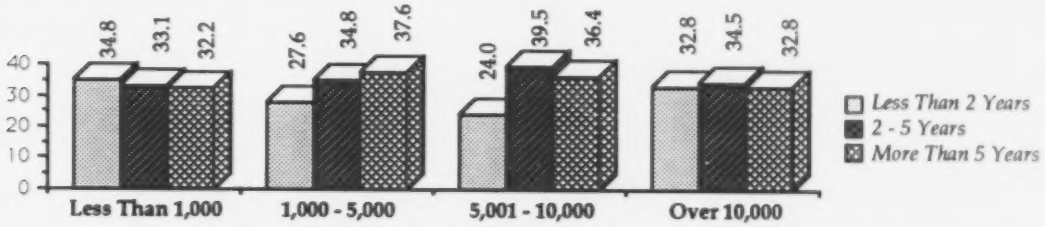

Figure 9. Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Length of Time Freshman Seminar Has Been Offered (*N* = 1093).

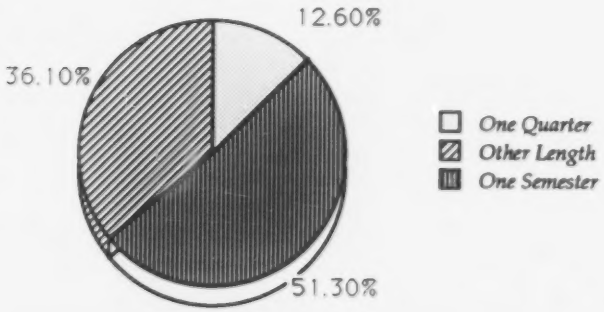

Figure 10. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Length of Freshman Seminar Course (*N* = 1164).

Course Length

Course Length Across All Institutions. Across all institutions, the typical length of the course was one college term (51.3% one semester; 12.6% one quarter), but 36.1% reported some other length varying from 1-2 weeks to 2 terms (see Figure 10).

Course Length By Type of Institution. In examining the length of the freshman seminar by type of institution, Table 4 shows that the seminar was less likely to be taught on the quarter system at private four-year institutions but more likely to be taught on the quarter system on two-year campuses. The seminar was more apt to be taught for one semester at public four-year campuses and less apt on two-year campuses.

Table 4
Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Length of Freshman Seminars (N = 1164)

	1 Quarter	1 Semester	Other
Public Four-Year	12.7	61.9	25.4
Private Four-Year	7.7	52.4	29.8
Two-Year	19.0	43.7	37.4
Other	12.5	45.2	42.3

$p < .01$

Course Length By Size of Institution. Table 5 shows no significant differences were obtained when course length was analyzed by size of institution (i.e., current undergraduate enrollment).

Table 5
Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Length of Freshman Seminars (N = 1152)

	1 Quarter	1 Semester	Other
Less Than 1,000	10.4	48.0	41.6
1,000 - 5,000	13.6	52.5	33.9
5,001 - 10,000	15.6	54.1	30.4
Over 10,000	12.5	54.0	32.5

p = ns

Course Credit

Course Credit Across All Institutions. Most campuses (82.2%) offered the course for credit as shown in Table 6. The most frequently offered forms of credit were one semester hour (41.4%) and three or more semester hours (17.4%). Quarter hours credit was awarded in 13.0% of cases while two semester hours of credit was awarded in 10.4% of cases.

Table 6
Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Amount of Credit Awarded Freshman Seminars (N = 1095)

Quarter Hours (Various)	13.0
One Semester Hour	41.4
Two Semester Hours	10.4
Three Semester Hours	17.4
Total Percentage Offering Credit	82.2
No Credit Offered	17.8

Course Credit By Type of Institution. The freshman seminar is less likely to be taught for credit in private four-year institutions and more likely to be taught for credit in public four-year and two-year campuses (Table 7).

Table 7
Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Amount of Credit Offered for Freshman Seminars (N = 1095)

	1 Sem Hour	2 Sem Hours	3 or more Sem Hours	Qtr Hours	No Credit
Public Four-Year	40.9	13.8	19.4	13.8	12.2
Private Four-Year	38.9	10.8	20.4	6.8	23.2
Two-Year	47.8	7.7	12.0	19.8	12.7
Other	32.0	9.3	17.5	15.5	25.8

$p < .01$

Course Credit By Size of Institution. When analyzed by institutional size, the results in Table 8 show that large campuses (over 10,000 students) were more likely than smaller ones to offer credit for the freshman seminar. They were also more likely to offer two or three semester hours of credit for the course. Small institutions (less than 1,000) were more likely to offer the seminar on a non-credit basis than were large institutions.

Table 8
Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Amount of Credit Offered for Freshman Seminars (N = 1084)

	1 Sem Hour	2 Sem Hours	3 or more Sem Hours	Qtr Hours	No Credit
Less Than 1,000	37.9	9.3	16.9	11.2	24.7
1,000 - 5,000	43.8	9.3	18.2	13.4	15.3
5,001 - 10,000	44.2	11.6	14.7	13.2	16.3
Over 10,000	40.0	16.5	20.0	17.4	6.1

$p < .01$

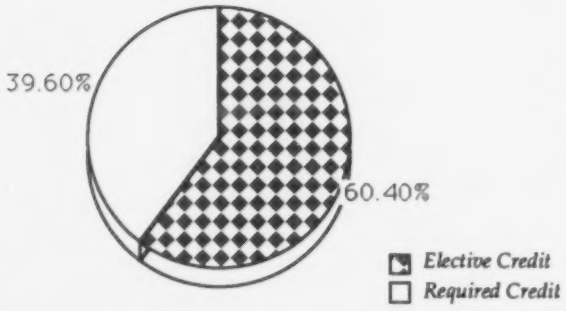

Figure 11. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Elective Credit Versus Required Credit for Freshman Seminars (*N* = 894).

Elective Credit or Required Credit

Elective Credit or Required Credit Across All Institutions. On those campuses where the course was offered for credit, it was offered for elective credit in 60.4% of cases while it was required in 39.6% of cases (see Figure 11).

Elective Credit or Required Credit by Type of Institution. Figure 12 shows that private four-year institutions were more apt to count the freshman seminar as a curriculum requirement whereas two-year and public four-year campuses were more likely to treat it as elective credit ($p < .01$).

Note: The data in Figure 11, Figure 12, and Table 9 pertain only to those campuses which offer the freshman seminar for credit.

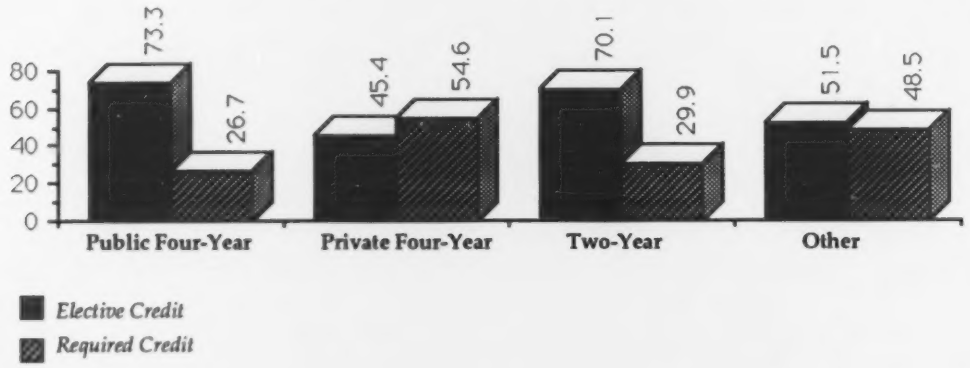

Figure 12. Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Elective Credit Versus Required Credit for Freshman Seminars ($N = 894$).

Elective Credit or Required Credit by Size of Institution. As reported in Figure 11, a majority (o0.4%) of all institutions that offer a freshman seminar for credit offer it as an elective. When these data are analyzed by size of institution, Table 9 shows that 55.7% of small institutions which offer the seminar for credit count the freshman seminar as a requirement. In fact, the larger the enrollment, the more likely the seminar is to be counted as an elective.

Table 9
Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Elective Credit Versus Required Credit for Freshman Seminars ($N = 888$)

	Elective Credit	Required Credit
Less Than 1,000	44.3	55.7
1,000 - 5,000	59.7	40.3
5,001 - 10,000	76.4	23.6
Over 10,000	84.4	15.6

$p < .01$

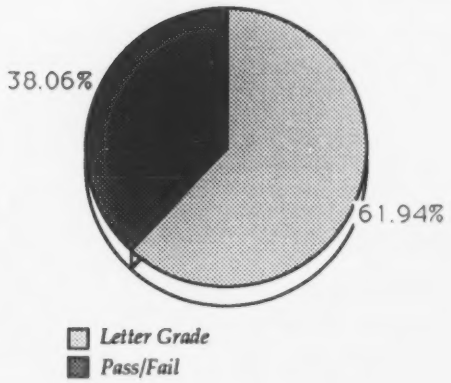

Figure 13. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Method of Grading for Freshman Seminars (N = 983).

Method of Grading

Method of Grading Across All Institutions. Method of grading the freshman seminar was also surveyed. On 61.94% of campuses, students received letter grades for the course while it was graded pass-fail on 38.06% of campuses (Figure 13).

Method of Grading by Type of Institution. Letter grades were somewhat more likely to be used on two-year campuses, but the differences were not significant (see Table 10).

Method of Grading by Size of Institution. When analyzed by size of institution, no significant differences were obtained on method of grading; however, institutions in the 5,001 to 10,000 range appeared somewhat more likely to use letter grades (see Table 11).

Table 10
Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Method of Grading Freshman Seminars (N = 983)

	Letter Grade	Pass-Fail
Public Four-Year	60.7	39.3
Private Four-Year	59.1	40.9
Two-Year	67.1	32.9
Other	59.3	40.7

p = ns

Table 11
Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Method of Grading Freshman Seminars (N = 977)

	Letter Grade	Pass-Fail
Less Than 1,000	58.7	41.3
1,000 - 5,000	63.6	36.4
5,001 - 10,000	68.1	31.9
Over 10,000	58.4	41.6

p = ns

Freshman Seminar as a Required Course

Course Required Across All Institutions. The course was required of all freshmen on 43.5% of all campuses (Figure 14). Note: The data in Figure 14, Table 12, and Table 13 include all institutions which require the course regardless of whether the course is offered for credit.

Course Required by Type of Institution. Private four-year campuses were considerably more likely than two-year or public four-year institutions to require the course of all freshmen (see Table 12).

Course Required by Size of Institution. Results in Table 13 show the seminar usually was required in institutions under 1,000 students, but tended not to be required in larger institutions. In large institutions (over 10,000), nearly 90% of campuses did not require the seminar. The smaller the institution, the more likely the course is required.

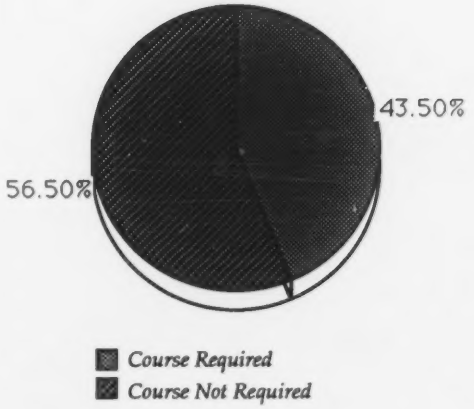

Figure 14. Percentages of All Institutions Requiring the Freshman Seminar Regardless of Whether or How Much Credit is Offered (N = 1077).

Table 12
Percentages of Institutions by Type Requiring the Freshmen Seminar (N = 1077)*

	Required	Not Required
Public Four-Year	25.3	74.7
Private Four-Year	58.8	41.2
Two-Year	33.9	66.1
Other	55.3	44.7

*Required regardless of whether or how much credit is offered.
$p < .01$

Table 13
Percentages of Institutions by Size Requiring the Freshman Seminar (N = 1066)*

	Required	Not Required
Less Than 1,000	61.6	38.4
1,000 - 5,000	41.6	58.4
5,001 - 10,000	30.7	69.3
Over 10,000	12.8	87.2

*Required regardless of whether or how much credit is offered.
$p < .01$

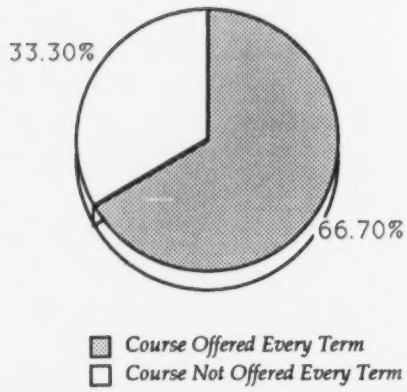

Figure 15. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Frequency of Offering Freshman Seminars (N = 1111).

Frequency Offered

Frequency Offered Across All Institutions. Two-thirds (66.7%) of all institutions reported that the freshman seminar was offered every school term (Figure 15).

Frequency Offered by Type of Institution. Figure 16 reveals a majority of all campus types offered the seminar every term ($p < .01$). Two-year institutions were the most likely to offer the course every term (83.9%) while private four-year campuses were the least likely (51.7%).

Frequency Offered by Size of Institution. Although Figure 15 shows a clear majority of all institutions reporting that the seminar was offered every term, there were differences by undergraduate enrollment ($p < .01$). Figure 17 shows that colleges and universities in the 5,001 - 10,000 range were more likely (76.0%) to offer the course each semester while the smallest institutions were least likely (60.6%).

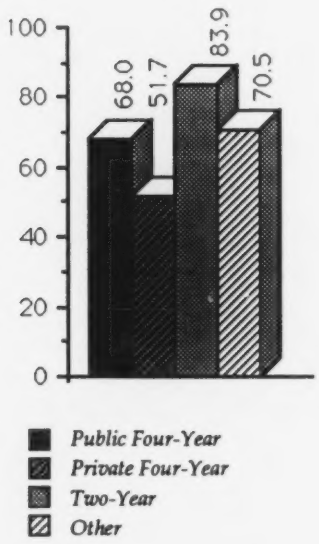

Figure 16. Percentages of Institutions by type Offering Freshman Seminar Every Term (N = 1111).

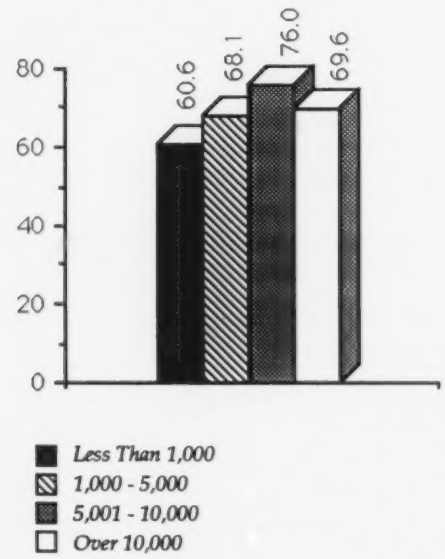

Figure 17. Percentages of Institutions by Size Offering Freshman Seminar Every Term (N = 1100).

Number of Sections

Number of Sections Across All Institutions. There was considerable variation in the number of sections of the seminar offered each term, but the typical pattern was either greater than 10 sections (30.3%) or 1-2 sections (29.8%) as shown in Figure 18. Approximately the same percentage of institutions offered 3-5 sections (20.8%) and 6-10 sections (19.1%).

Number of Sections by Type of Institution. Public four-year campuses were more likely than other types to offer more than 10 sections of the seminar each term (Table 14). Correspondingly, these same institutions were the least likely to offer only 1-2 sections per term.

Number of Sections by Size of Institution. As expected, larger institutions were more apt to offer more than ten sections; in contrast, the smallest institutions were more likely to offer only 1-2 sections of the seminar (see Table 15).

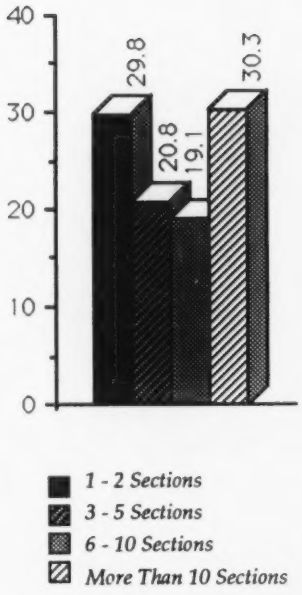

Figure 18. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Number of Sections of Freshman Seminar Offered Each Term ($N = 953$).

Table 14
Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Number of Sections of Freshman Seminar Offered Each Term ($N = 953$)

	1 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 10	More Than 10
Public Four-Year	19.2	17.9	18.8	44.2
Private Four-Year	33.8	16.5	17.3	32.4
Two-Year	30.9	26.6	22.0	20.6
Other	37.7	28.6	18.2	15.6

$p < .01$

Table 15
Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Number of Sections of Freshman Seminar Offered Each Term ($N = 953$)

	1 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 10	More Than 10
Less Than 1,000	44.4	23.4	18.4	13.8
1,000 - 5,000	26.1	20.1	18.9	34.9
5,001 - 10,000	15.8	17.8	24.8	41.6
Over 10,000	14.2	18.9	17.0	50.0

$p < .01$

Students Enrolled per Term

Students Enrolled per Term in Freshman Seminars Across All Institutions. Figure 19 shows about two institutions in five reporting more than 200 students enrolled in freshman seminars per term. Other reported enrollments were 101-200 students (21.8%), 50 or less students (18.5%) and 51-100 students (18.0%).

Students Enrolled per Term in Freshman Seminars by Type of Institution. Over 60% of all institutions as shown in Table 16 report that the enrollment per term in freshman seminar courses exceeds 100 students. The majority (52.8%) of public four-year campuses report enrollment per term in excess of 200 students. Private four-year campuses were more likely than other types to report enrollment per term in the range of 101-200.

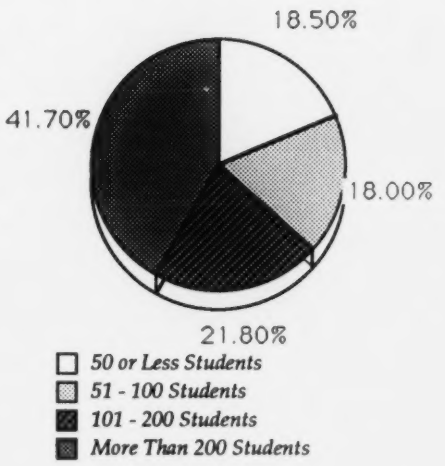

Figure 19. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Students Enrolled per Term in Freshman Seminars (*N* = 925).

Table 16
Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Students Enrolled Per Term in Freshman Seminars (N = 925)

	50 or less	51-100	101-200	More Than 200
Public Four-Year	17.3	12.2	17.8	52.8
Private Four-Year	17.8	20.6	27.6	34.0
Two-Year	17.3	18.5	17.3	46.9
Other	28.4	19.8	22.2	29.6

$p < .01$

Students Enrolled per Term in Freshman Seminars by Size of Institution. Somewhat surprisingly, Table 17 shows that institutions enrolling 5,001 - 10,000 students were more likely than larger campuses to report seminar enrollments of greater than 200 (64.7%, 58.4%). Small institutions were more likely to report total seminar enrollments of 50 or less.

Table 17
Percentage of Institutions by Size Reporting Students Enrolled per Term in Freshman Seminars (N = 916)

	50 or less	51-100	101-200	More Than 200
Less Than 1,000	26.3	20.9	32.0	20.9
1,000 - 5,000	16.6	18.8	17.1	47.6
5,001 - 10,000	11.8	7.8	15.7	64.7
Over 10,000	7.9	14.9	18.8	58.4

$p < .01$

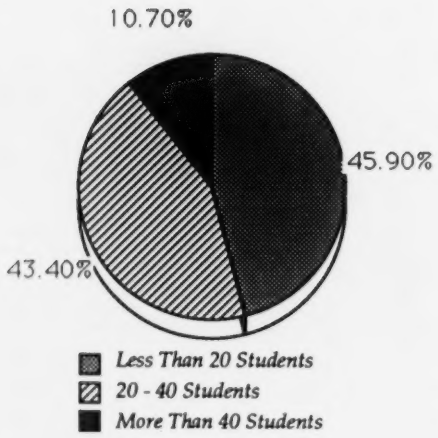

Figure 20. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Average Section Size of Freshman Seminars (*N* = 1085).

Section Size

Section Size Across All Institutions. Average size of freshman seminars tended to be small with 45.9% of institutions reporting average class size of less than 20 (Figure 20). Class sizes of 20-40 were reported by 43.4% while classes exceeding 40 were reported by only 10.7%.

Section Size by Type of Institution. As shown in Table 18, nearly 90% of all institutions reported average section sizes under 40. Private four-year campuses were more likely to report section sizes less than 20 while public four-year campuses were more likely to report section sizes of 20-40.

Table 18
Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Average Section Size of Freshman Seminar (N = 1085)

	Average Section Size		
	Less Than 20	**20-40**	**More Than 40**
Public Four-Year	36.2	56.1	7.7
Private Four-Year	67.0	30.4	12.6
Two-Year	39.3	51.5	9.2
Other	44.6	40.2	15.2

$p < .01$

Section Size by Size of Institution. Average section size for the seminar varied as one would predict (Table 19). Larger campuses tended to have larger average section sizes (20-40) while smaller institutions tended to have smaller section sizes (less than 20).

Table 19
Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Average Section Size of Freshman Seminar (N = 1074)

	Average Section Size		
	Less Than 20	**20-40**	**More Than 40**
Less Than 1,000	49.1	38.9	12.0
1,000 - 5,000	48.4	39.8	11.9
5,001 - 10,000	38.9	55.6	5.6
Over 10,000	35.6	60.2	4.2

$p < .01$

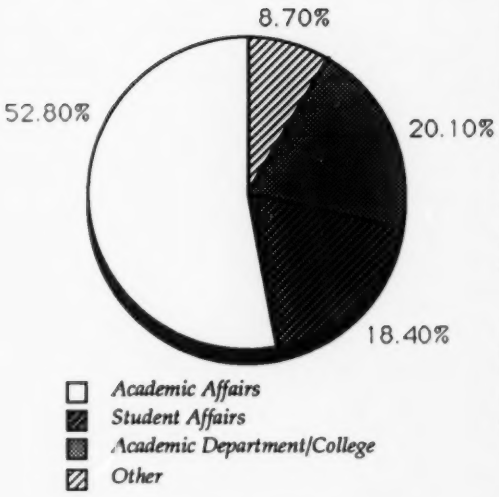

Figure 21. Percentages of Institutions Reporting Organizational Relationships for Freshman Seminars ($N = 1090$).

Organizational Relationships

Organizational Relationships Across All Institutions. Academic affairs is the typical organizational unit to which freshman seminar programs report with 52.8% of all institutions reporting this relationship (see Figure 21). An academic department/college supervises the seminar in 20.1% of cases while 18.4% report to student affairs.

Organizational Relationships by Type of Institution. Figure 22 reveals that in all institutional types, freshman orientation seminars are more likely to report to academic affairs ($p < .01$).

Organizational Relationships by Size of Institution. As shown in Table 20, academic affairs was the typical reporting relationship for the freshman seminars, and this finding held true in all size categories.

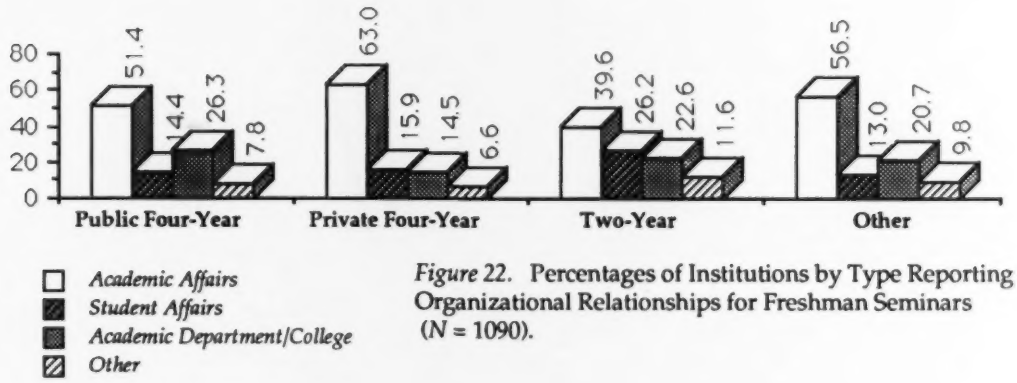

Figure 22. Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Organizational Relationships for Freshman Seminars ($N = 1090$).

Table 20
Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Organizational Relationships for Freshman Seminars ($N = 1080$)

	Academic Affairs	Student Affairs	Department or College	Other
Less Than 1,000	58.8	18.5	15.1	7.7
1,000 - 5,000	52.0	20.0	20.2	7.8
5,001 - 10,000	47.2	13.6	28.0	11.2
Over 10,000	45.8	17.0	27.1	10.2

$p < .01$

Figure 23. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Annual Budgetary Support for Freshman Seminars (N = 927).

Fiscal Support

Fiscal Support Across all Institutions. Figure 23 shows about 90% of all institutions reporting that the freshman seminar program was allocated less than $25,000 annually. A total of 927 institutions or 79.6% of the sample provided budget information.

Fiscal Support by Type of Institution. Public four-year institutions as shown in Figure 24 were more likely than other types to allocate $25,000 or more to support the freshman seminar ($p < .05$).

Fiscal Support by Size of Institution. As shown in Figure 25, larger institutions reported larger operating budgets for the seminar even though at least 75% of all institutions regardless of size indicated that seminar operating budgets were less than $25,000 ($p < .01$).

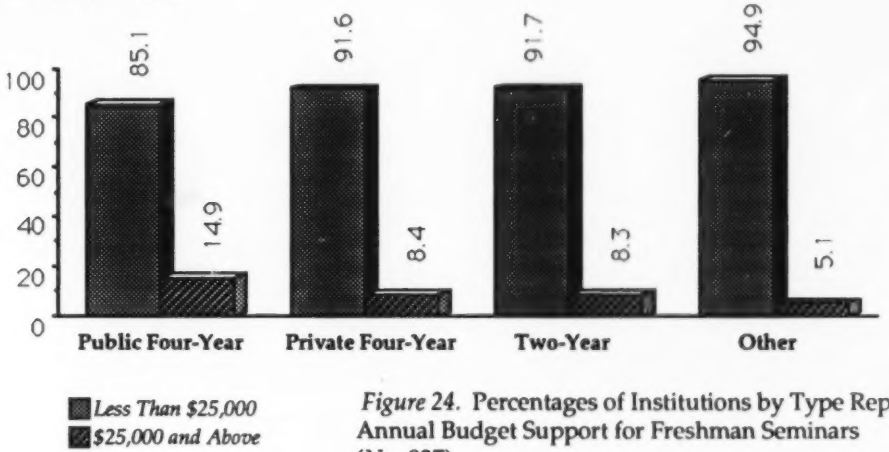

Figure 24. Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Annual Budget Support for Freshman Seminars (N = 927).

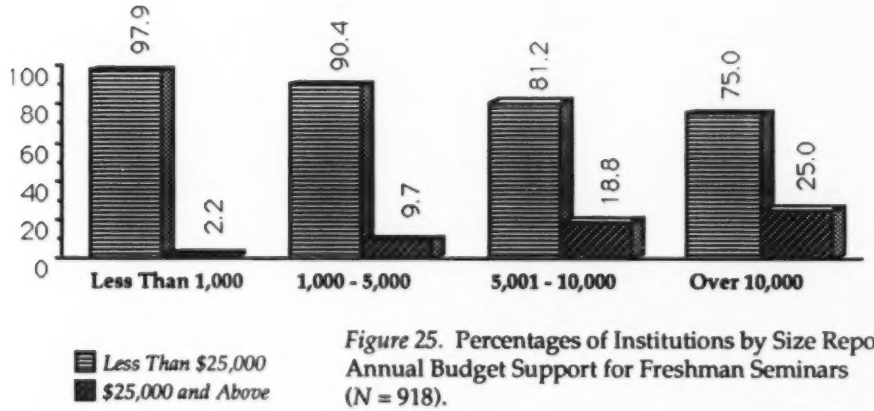

Figure 25. Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Annual Budget Support for Freshman Seminars (N = 918).

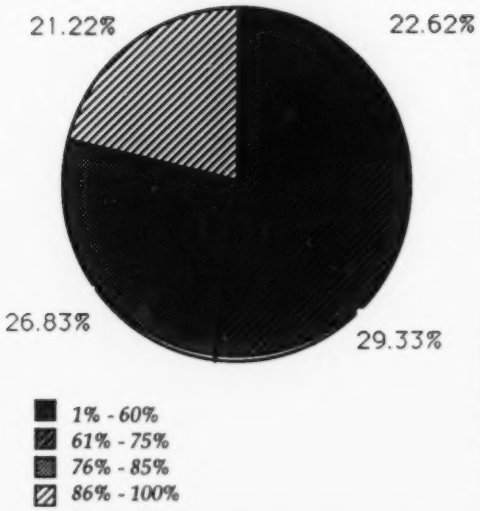

Figure 26. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Sophomore Return Rates for Students Enrolled in Freshman Seminars (N = 358).

Retention

Retention Across All Institutions. Only about 30% of institutions reported retention results (i.e., the sophomore return rate) for students enrolled in the freshman seminar. Nearly one institution in two reported a return rate of at least 76%. About one institution in five reported a return rate of 86% or better (Figure 26).

Retention by Type of Institution. Except for private four-year colleges and universities, a majority of all institution types reported sophomore return rates below 76% as shown in Figure 27. Private four-year institutions were more likely than other types to report return rates in excess of 85%, and two-year campuses were least likely to report such rates ($p < .05$).

Retention by Size of Institution. No significant differences were obtained on retention of students enrolled in freshman seminars by size of institution (Figure 28).

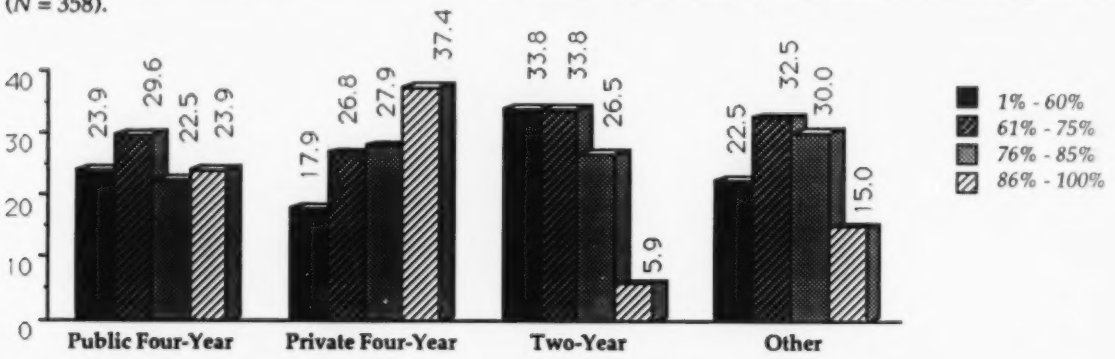

Figure 27. Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Sophomore Return Rates for Students Enrolled in Freshman Seminars (N = 358).

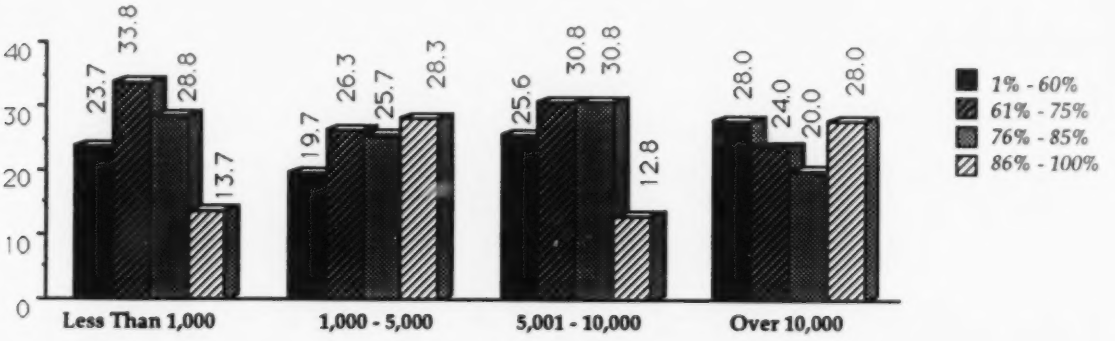

Figure 28. Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Sophomore Return Rate for Students Enrolled in Freshman Seminars (N = 358).

Figure 29. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Availability of Published Research on Freshman Seminars (N = 975).

Research Availability

Research Availability Across All Institutions. Institutions reported the extent to which written/published research information was available concerning the freshman seminar. Figure 29 shows that only 11.1% reported such information was available.

Research Availability by Type of Institution. As noted in Figure 29, only about one institution in ten reported that published research is available on their freshman seminar program. Figure 30 shows public four-year institutions were most likely to report research availability while two-year campuses were least likely ($p < .01$).

Research Availability by Size of Institution. Larger institutions were more likely than smaller ones to publish research findings concerning the freshman seminar (see Figure 31). Approximately one large institution (over 10,000) in five reported that written research results were available ($p < .01$).

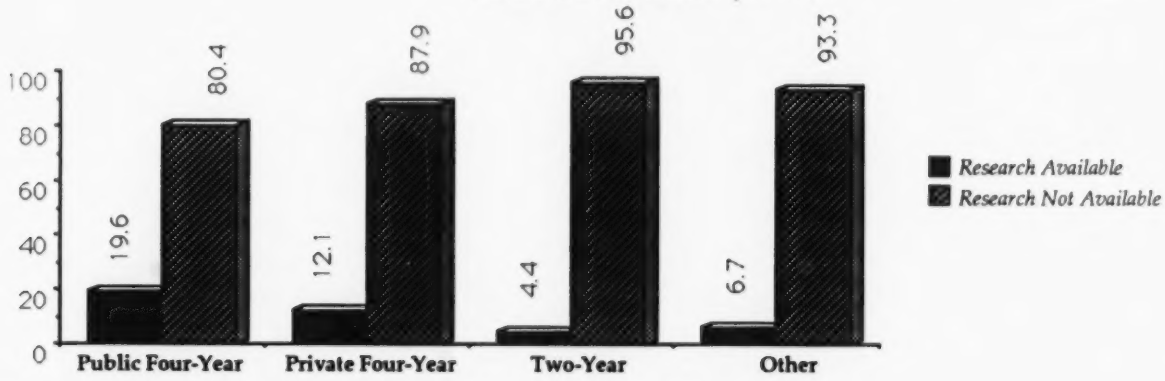

Figure 30. Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Availability of Published Research on Freshman Seminars (N = 975).

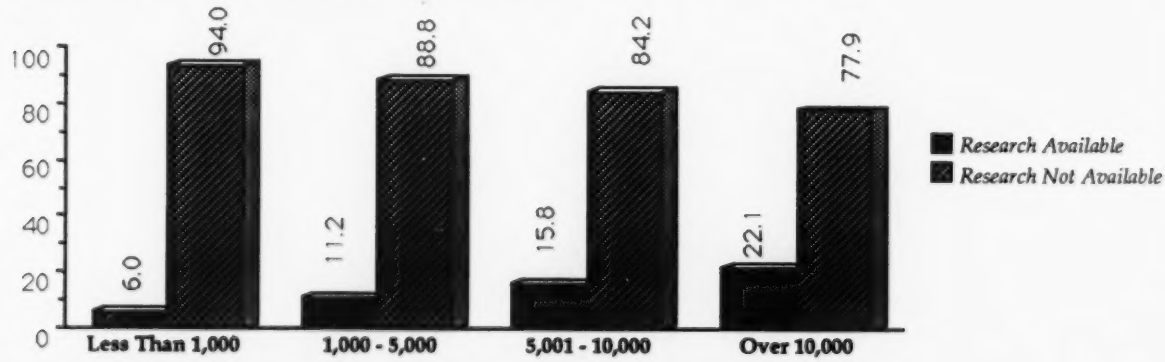

Figure 31. Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Availability of Published Research on Freshman Seminars (N = 964).

Content of Freshman Seminars

Content of Freshman Seminars Across All Institutions

The freshman seminar as described in this study has a widely varying content ranging from study skills to spirituality. The survey form listed 31 items descriptive of seminar content and asked respondents to check those included in the seminar on their campuses. The complete list of all 31 content items is shown in Table 21 by the percentage of institutions reporting use.

Table 21
Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Content in Freshman Seminars by Frequency of Use (N = 1164)

Academic Planning	75.9	Writing	44.9
Library Skills	69.9	Community Involvement	42.8
Value of College	69.2	Critical Thinking	40.3
Study Skills	68.1	Introduction to Liberal Arts	36.4
Managing Test Anxiety	68.0	Understanding Organization of Academic Discipline	31.4
Career Planning	63.3	Sexism	30.8
General Orientation to Health Education Problems	57.6	Understanding Professors	30.2
General Orientation to Campus	57.2	Leadership	26.8
Stress Management	51.2	Health & Nutrition	26.5
Social Skills	49.3	Alcohol & Drugs	24.7
Understanding Connections of General Education Requirements	49.2	Money Management	22.5
Values Clarification	49.2	Introduction to Instructor's Discipline	21.0
Group Building	45.3	Human Sexuality	20.8
Relationships	45.0	Consumer Skills for Education System	19.3
Campus Involvement	44.9	Spirituality	16.1

Ten of the 31 listed items were checked by a majority of respondents. Table 21 shows that the most frequently included item (Academic Planning) was cited by three of every four respondents (75.9%) while the least reported item (Spirituality) was checked by 16.1% of respondents. The most frequently checked content items in order of popularity focused on topics to improve academic performance.

These 31 items appear to be best suited for those seminars that are described as "success/survival/orientation" following the typology of Murphy (1989). Respondents completing the survey were asked to specify content items other than those listed. The most frequently added items were Academic Planning, Library Skills, and Study Skills, which duplicated the most popular survey responses. In other words, when asked to list additional topics offered in the freshman seminar on their own campuses, most respondents simply reiterated the above items that had been provided by the survey questionnaire.

Content of Freshman Seminars by Type of Institution

Colleges and universities differed considerably by type in the content utilized in freshman seminars. For example, Group Building and Writing were used in about half of public and private four-year institutions but were only found in one of three two-year campuses. Career Planning was used by a majority of all institutional types but was a more prevalent topic in public four-year campuses and two-year institutions. Human Sexuality was a more popular topic in public and private four-year campuses.

Managing Test Anxiety was found in a majority of all seminars but was even more likely to be found in two-year institutions.

Considerable variation was found in the use of Spirituality as content. It was used more frequently in private four-year campuses (29.7%) but was rarely used in two-year (3.5%) and public four-year institutions (6.9%). Four-year public and private campuses were most likely to provide an Introduction to the Liberal Arts in their seminars. In contrast, four-year public campuses were most likely to teach Consumer Skills for the Educational System while four-year private campuses were least likely.

A majority of four-year campuses taught Understanding Connections of General Education and Core Requirements; this topic was stressed most in public four-year institututions. Understanding Professors was a more prevalent topic with public four-year campuses but was least likely to be used on two-year campuses. Although a majority of all campuses reported using General Orientation to Higher Education Problems, this topic was less likely to be used in private four-year campuses.

Relationships was another topic taught on about half of four-year campuses but was less likely to be found on two-year campuses. A similar finding occurred for Campus Involvement. The topic, Alcohol and Drugs, was most likely to be found in seminars offered on four-year campuses. A complete report of how seminar content items varied within types of institutions is shown in Table 22.

The ten most popular topics for freshman seminars varied little by type of institution. With few exceptions, the most popular topics for all campuses combined were virtually the same as the

Table 22
Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Content in Freshman Seminars ($N = 1067$)

Content Item	Public Four-Year	Private Four-Year	Two-Year	Other
Academic Planning	78.5	72.8	77.3	78.9
*Alcohol & Drugs	28.1	27.9	19.3	20.2
*Campus Involvement	50.0	48.0	38.5	40.4
**Career Planning	69.2	56.6	69.5	56.7
Community Involvement	45.0	42.7	41.4	42.3
**Consumer Skills for the Education System	27.3	14.4	19.8	19.2
Critical Thinking	42.7	41.2	37.9	38.5
General Orientation to Campus	58.9	60.4	53.2	52.9
**General Orientation to Health Education Problems	62.3	51.3	61.2	61.5
**Group Building	48.5	55.5	30.2	43.3
Health & Nutrition	28.9	27.9	25.0	20.2
Human Sexuality	24.6	25.2	12.9	18.3
*Introduction to Instructor's Discipline	22.3	24.3	18.1	12.5
**Introduction to Liberal Arts	40.0	53.3	15.8	23.1
*Leadership	26.5	30.8	21.8	26.9
Library Skills	71.9	67.7	71.3	66.4
**Managing Test Anxiety	69.2	61.1	76.7	66.4
Money Management	23.1	23.0	21.0	24.0
Reading	66.5	68.1	69.3	64.4
**Relationships	46.9	51.8	35.6	42.3
Sexism	34.2	31.6	25.9	34.6
Social Skills	48.9	48.9	49.4	51.9
**Spirituality	6.9	29.7	3.5	22.1
Stress Management	48.1	53.1	49.4	56.7
Study Skills	70.0	65.0	72.4	62.5
**Understanding Connections of General Education Requirements	57.7	52.0	40.8	44.2
Understanding Organization of Academic Discipline	37.3	30.3	29.3	28.9
**Understanding Professors	39.6	29.0	25.3	28.9
Value of College	71.9	69.3	68.7	64.4
Values Clarification	54.2	52.0	43.1	45.2
**Writing	51.5	53.1	33.3	31.7

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$

top ten topics by type of institution. Understanding Connections of General Education Requirements made the top ten list for public four-year campuses while Group Building and Introduction to Liberal Arts made the list for four-year private institutions. Managing Test Anxiety achieved a higher rank among two-year campuses while Reading was higher ranked at four-year private institutions. Stress Management made the top ten list for two-year and other campuses but not the other types. A comparison of top ten rankings by type is shown in Table 23.

Table 23
Ranking of Ten Most Popular Seminar Topics by Type Institution (N = 1067)

Ranking for All Institutions		*Rankings for:* Public Four-Year	Private Four-Year	Two-Year	Other
1	Academic Planning (AP)	AP	AP	AP	AP
2	Library Skills (LS)	LS	VC	TA	LS
3	Value of College (VC)	VC	R	SS	TA
4	Study Skills (SS)	SS	LS	LS	R
5	Managing Text Anxiety (TA)	CP	SS	CP	VC
6	Reading (R)	TA	TA	R	SS
7	Career Planning (CP)	R	OC	VC	OP
8	Gen'l Orient. to Health Ed Probs (OP)	OP	CP	OP	CP
9	Gen'l Orient to Campus (OC)	OC	b	OC	SM
10	Stress Management (SM)	a	c	SM	OC

a - Understanding Connections of General Education Requirements
b - Group Building
c - Introduction to Liberal Arts

Content of Freshman Seminars by Size of Institution

Colleges and universities did not differ as much by current undergraduate enrollment as they did by type concerning the utilization of freshman seminar topics. Career Planning was more apt to be found on larger campuses (over 5,000). A similar finding was observed for Values Clarification and also for the topic, Consumer Skills for the Educational System. These topics were more likely to be used on campuses of over 10,000 students than on campuses with less than 1,000 students.

In contrast, Spirituality was more likely to be found on the smaller campuses (less than 1,000). A complete report of how seminar content items varied by current undergraduate enrollment is shown in Table 24.

Table 24 *Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Content in Freshman Seminars* ($N = 1067$)

Content Item	Less Than 1,000	1,000 - 5,000	5,001 - 10,000	Over 10,000
Academic	75.7	75.4	80.0	77.8
Alcohol & Drugs	25.6	23.6	26.7	26.2
Campus Involvement	46.4	44.2	43.7	46.0
* Career Planning	59.2	63.8	71.9	67.5
Community Involvement	43.7	41.3	42.2	50.0
** Consumer Skills for the Education System	15.7	19.2	20.7	30.2
Critical Thinking	36.0	41.1	46.7	45.2
General Orientation to Campus	58.9	56.0	60.7	54.8
General Orientation to Health Education Problems	53.9	58.9	57.8	61.9
Group Building	46.4	43.4	45.2	50.8
Health & Nutrition	28.5	25.0	24.4	29.4
Human Sexuality	25.1	18.8	19.3	19.1
Introduction to Instructor's Discipline	23.2	18.4	26.7	18.3
Introduction to Liberal Arts	38.7	36.2	34.8	34.9
Leadership	30.9	25.2	28.2	22.2
Library Skills	72.0	68.4	68.9	70.6
Managing Test Anxiety	69.1	67.4	70.4	65.1
Money Management	24.5	20.4	24.4	23.8
Reading	70.7	65.7	70.4	65.1
Relationships	46.9	44.4	45.2	44.4
Sexism	35.5	29.1	28.2	27.0
** Spirituality	26.9	11.4	9.6	9.5
Stress Management	56.5	49.2	49.6	46.8
Study Skills	68.3	66.9	67.4	75.4
Understanding Connections of General Education Requirements	48.5	50.0	43.0	57.9
Understanding Professors	29.6	31.0	33.3	27.0
Value of College	67.2	68.6	74.8	75.4
Values Clarification	46.9	47.3	54.8	58.7
Writing	45.1	42.3	55.6	46.0

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

The ten most popular topics by size of undergraduate enrollment were very similar. Academic Planning was the most frequently appearing topic in all size categories. Understanding Connections of General Education Requirements made the list for campuses ranging in enrollment from 1,000 - 5,000 and over 10,000. Likewise, Writing made the list for the 5,001 - 10,000 category, and Values Clarification achieved top ten status in the over 10,000 category. A comparison of top ten rankings by current undergraduate enrollment is shown in Table 25.

Table 25
Ranking of Ten Most Popular Seminar Topics by Size of Institution

Rank for all Institutions		*Ranking for:* Less Than 1,000	1,000-5,000	5,001-10,000	Over 10,000
1	Academic Planning (AP)	AP	AP	AP	AP
2	Library Skills (LS)	LS	VC	VC	SS
3	Value of College (VC)	R	LS	CP	VC
4	Study Skills (SS)	TA	TA	TA	LS
5	Managing Test Anxiety (TA)	SS	R	R	CP
6	Reading (R)	VC	CP	LS	TA
7	Career Planning (CP)	CP	OP	SS	R
8	Gen'l Orient to Health Ed Probs (OP)	OC	OC	OC	OP
9	Gen'l Orient to Campus (OC)	SM	a	OP	c
10	Stress Management (SM)	OP	SM	b	a

a - Understanding Connections of General Education Requirements
b - Writing
c - Values Clarification

Faculty/Staff Development Programs For Freshman Seminar Instructors

Availability of Training Programs for Freshman Seminar Instructors

Availability of Training Programs Across All Institutions. Nearly half (46.4%) of all institutions reported that a faculty/staff development program was offered in conjunction with the freshman seminar course (see Figure 32). Such programs are designed to prepare instructors to teach the seminar.

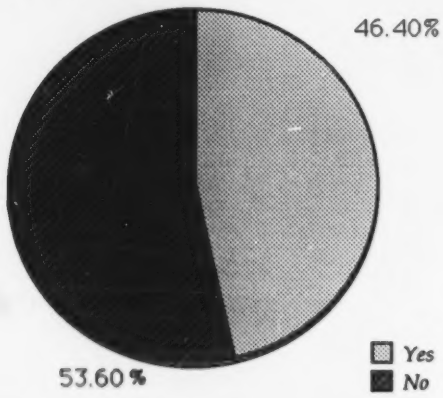

Figure 32. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Faculty/Staff Development Programs Offered in Conjunction with Freshman Seminars (N = 1082).

Availability of Faculty/Staff Development Programs by Type of Institution. Four-year institutions were more likely than two-year and other types to offer faculty/staff development programs in conjunction with the freshman seminar course. Responses by type are shown in Table 26.

Availability of Faculty/Staff Development Programs by Size of Institution. Institutions with over 5,000 enrollment are much more likely than smaller ones to offer faculty/staff development programs. In fact, a majority of such institutions offer faculty/staff development programs. Complete responses by enrollment are shown in Table 27.

Table 26
Percentage of Institutions Offering Faculty/Staff Development Programs by Type of Institution (N = 1082)

Type	Percent
Public Four-Year	56.3
Private Four-Year	50.2
Two-Year	36.1
Other	38.7

$p < .01$

Table 27
Percentage of Institutions Offering Faculty/Staff Development Programs by Current Undergraduate Enrollment (N = 1071)

Enrollment	Percent
Less Than 1,000	37.0
1,000 - 5,000	46.3
5,001 - 10,000	63.5
Over 10,000	59.0

$p < .01$

Training Programs Required for Freshman Seminar Instructors

Training Programs Required for Freshman Seminar Instructors Across All Institutions. Nearly three institutions in four (71.4%) that offered a faculty/staff development program reported that it was required for those teaching the seminar (see Figure 33).

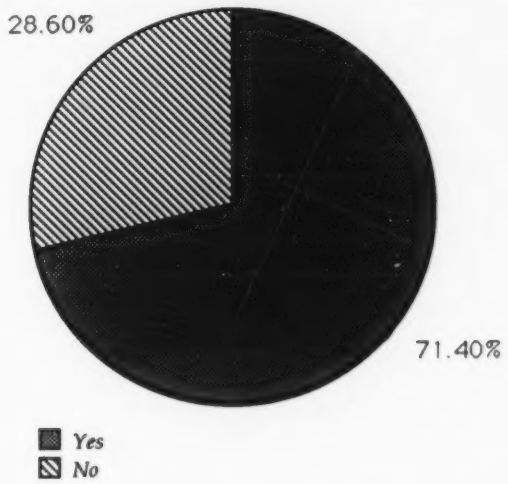

Figure 33. Percentages of Institutions Reporting Faculty/Staff Development Programs Required for Freshman Seminar Instructors (*N* = 598).

Training Programs Required for Freshman Seminar Instructors By Type of Institution. There were no differences by type of institution in the percentage of colleges and universities that reported faculty/staff development programs were required for freshman seminar instructors. Two-year institutions, however, appeared somewhat less likely to require the practice than other types (see Table 28).

Table 28
Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Faculty/Staff Development Programs Required for Freshman Seminar Instructors (*N* = 598)

Type	Percent
Public Four-Year	71.4
Private Four-Year	75.3
Two-Year	64.5
Other	74.4

p = ns

Training Programs Required for Freshman Seminar Instructors by Size of Institution. In like manner, there were no differences by size of institution in the extent to which faculty/staff development programs were required of seminar instructors (see Table 29).

Table 29
Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Faculty/Staff Development Programs Required for Freshman Seminar Instructors (N = 595)

	Percent
Less Than 1,000	72.0
1,000 to 5,000	71.2
5,001 to 10,000	73.6
Over 10,000	71.3

p = ns

Length of Faculty/Staff Development Programs

Length of Faculty/Staff Development Programs Across All Institutions. Slightly more than half of the institutions that reported faculty/staff development programs provided information on the number of hours of training offered. Of those reporting, slightly more than half noted that programs lasted ten hours or less. One institution in five, however, reported training programs lasting more than 20 hours as shown in Figure 34.

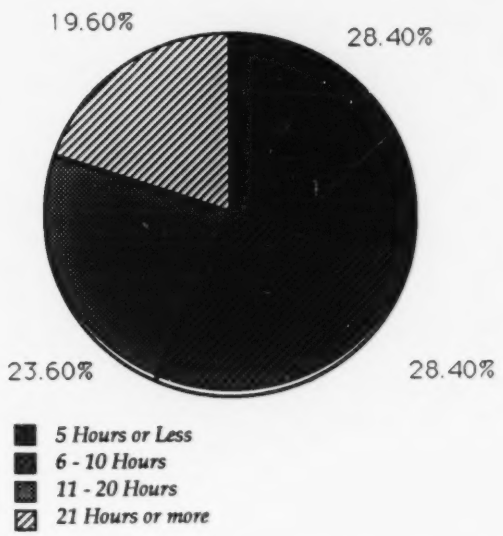

Figure 34. Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Length of Faculty/Staff Development Programs to Train Instructors for Freshman Seminars (*N* = 275).

Length of Faculty Development Programs By Type of Institution. As shown in Figure 35, there were no differences in length of faculty/staff development programs by type of institution although programs at two-year institutions appeared more likely than other types to last five hours or less.

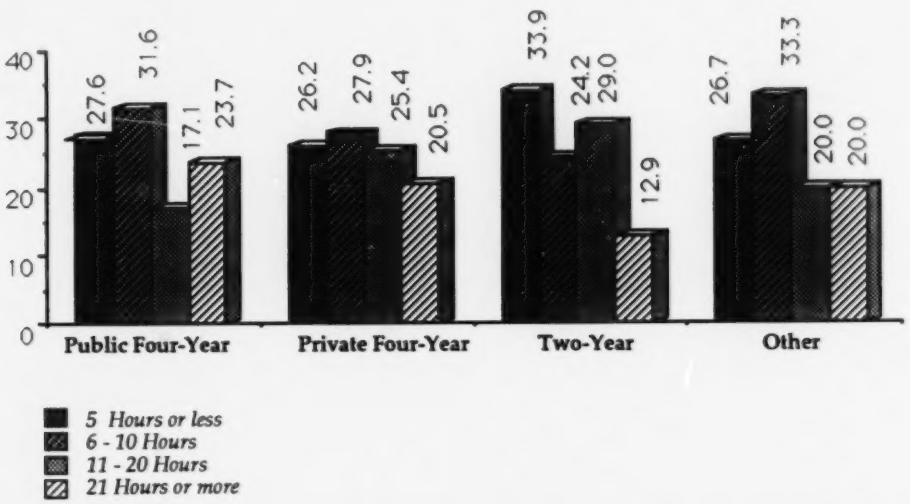

Figure 35. Percentages of Institutions by Type Reporting Length of Faculty/Staff Development Program to Train Instructors for Freshman Seminars (N = 275).

Length of Faculty Development Programs By Size of Institution. Similar to the analysis by type of institution, there were no differences by size of institution in the length of faculty/staff development programs (see Figure 36).

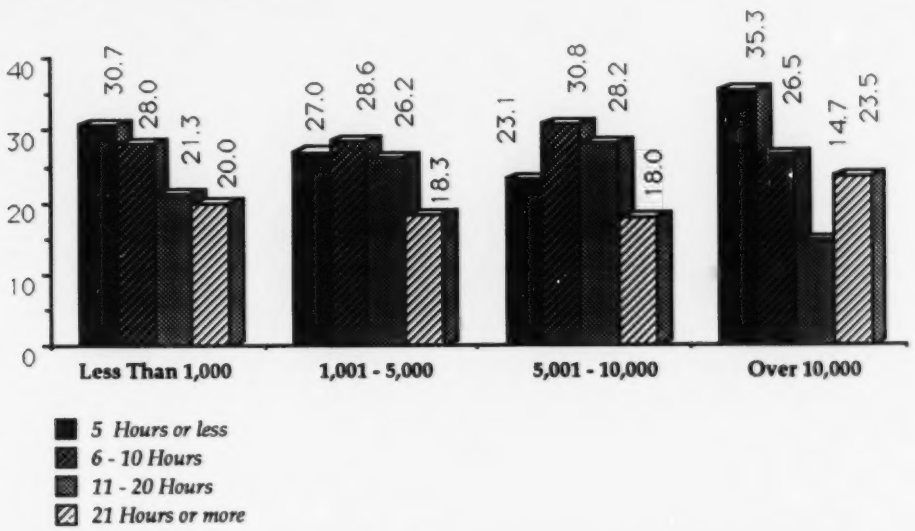

Figure 36. Percentages of Institutions by Size Reporting Length of Faculty/Student Development Programs to Train Instructors for Freshman Seminars (N = 275).

Description of Freshman Seminar Instructors

Description of Freshman Seminar Instructors Across All Institutions. Table 30 describes persons who were reported as eligible to teach the seminar. The most frequently cited included faculty with master's degrees (63.8%), non-faculty academic affairs professionals (55.1%), faculty with doctorates (49.1%), and administrators (48.3%). Other personnel cited as eligible to teach included student affairs professionals and both undergraduate and graduate students.

Table 30
Percentages of All Institutions Reporting Descriptions of Instructors Eligible to Teach Freshman Seminars ($N = 1164$)

Instructors	Percent
Faculty with Master's Degrees	63.8
Academic Affairs Professionals (Non-Faculty)	55.1
Faculty with Doctorates	49.1
Administrators	48.3
Student Affairs Professionals	38.4
Students (Undergraduates)	32.8
Doctoral Candidates	26.0
Master's Candidates	25.0

Description of Faculty Seminar Instructors by Type of Institution. Faculty with master's degrees was the most frequently cited instructor type in all types of institutions. Faculty with doctorates was the second most used type in four-year institutions while administrators and academic affairs professionals (non-faculty) were the second most cited types in two-year and other institutions respectively. Academic affairs professionals, faculty with doctorates, student affairs staff, and master's level students were more apt to be used in four-year campuses than other types. Doctoral level students were less likely to be used in two-year institutions. Responses by type of institution are reported in Table 31.

Table 31
Percentages of Institutions by Type Describing Instructors Eligible to Teach Freshman Seminars ($N = 1152$)

Type	Public Four-Year	Private Four-Year	Two-Year	Other
**Academic Affairs Professionals (Non-Faculty)	63.1	57.7	45.4	55.8
* Administrators	55.8	46.5	46.6	43.3
Faculty with Master's Degrees	66.2	64.6	62.6	58.7
**Faculty with Doctorates	63.9	58.4	28.5	40.4
**Student Affairs Staff	48.9	37.0	34.2	33.7
**Students (Doctoral Level)	28.5	30.3	19.8	22.1
**Students (Master's Level)	31.2	25.0	21.0	23.1
Students (Undergraduate)	34.6	33.6	31.9	27.9

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$

Description of Freshman Seminar Instructors by Size of Institution. Faculty with master's degrees was the most frequently cited type of instructor in all size levels. Faculty with doctorates was more common in institutions with over 10,000 students. Responses by size of institution are shown in Table 32.

Table 32

Percentages of Institutions by Size Describing Instructors Eligible to Teach Freshman Seminars (N = 1152)

Size	Less Than 1,000	1,000 - 5,000	5,001 - 10,000	Over 10,000
Academic Affairs Professionals (Non-Faculty)	56.0	53.9	56.3	57.1
Administrators	49.1	46.5	51.1	50.8
Faculty With Master's Degrees	64.8	61.4	70.4	68.3
* Faculty With Doctorates	49.3	46.3	49.6	60.3
Student Affairs Staff	38.1	37.4	41.5	42.9
Students (Doctorate Level)	28.0	23.3	34.1	23.8
Students (Master's Level)	22.1	24.2	31.9	28.6
Students (Undergraduate)	36.5	31.4	34.1	27.8

*$p < .05$

DISCUSSION

The following statements highlight the results of this national survey on freshman seminars.

Description of Course

- The clear majority of freshman seminars are of recent origin. Over 60% of courses have been offered for five years or less.
- Most seminars are taught for one full academic term. The duration of over 60% of seminars was one semester or one quarter in length.
- The freshman seminar is offered for credit in over 80% of institutions.
- Faculty are largely responsible for coordinating freshman seminars and for developing course content.
- Over 60% of institutions offering the seminar grade the course with letter grades.
- Over 40% of institutions offering the seminar require the course of all freshmen.
- Slightly more than two institutions in three offer the seminar each term.
- There is wide variation in enrollment and the number of sections of the seminar offered. Nearly half of the institutions keep class size to 20 students or less.
- Generally the freshman seminar falls under academic leadership. In over 70% of institutions, those responsible for the course report to academic affairs or to an academic unit.
- Freshman seminars operate with minimal funding. About 90% of programs have annual budgets under $25,000.
- Evaluation of the seminar is weak with only one institution in ten publishing research results. However, one college in three tracks the sophomore return rates of seminar participants. Wide variation exists among institutions in reported sophomore return rates.

Course Content

- Freshman seminar course content generally seems designed to help students improve academic performance and to take full advantage of college opportunities.
- The ten most frequently cited course content areas are used by a majority of institutions offering freshman seminars. They are listed by the percentage of institutions reporting their use and were: Academic Planning (75.9), Library Skills (69.9), Value of College (69.2), Study Skills (68.1), Managing Test Anxiety (68.0), Reading (67.8), Career Planning (63.3), General Orientation to Health Education Problems (57.6), General Orientation to Campus (57.2), and Stress Management (51.2).

Faculty-Staff Development Programs

- Many institutions provide special training for those teaching freshman seminars. Nearly half of reporting institutions note that a faculty/staff development program is offered in conjunction with the freshman seminar.

- Over 70% of institutions offering such programs require participation as a condition to teach the seminar.

- Typical development programs last less than 10 hours, but nearly one in five requires 20 hours or more of training by participants.

- A wide variety of persons are used to teach freshman seminars. Those used in a majority or near majority of institutions are: faculty with master's degrees, academic affairs professionals (non-faculty), faculty with doctoral degrees, and administrators.

Analyses by Type of Institution

- Public four-year institutions are ***more*** likely than other types to:

  - offer seminar for one semester in length
  - count seminar for degree credit
  - offer seminar for elective credit
  - offer more than 10 sections of seminar
  - enroll more than 200 students in seminar
  - have seminar report to academic college/department
  - have operating budget of $25,000 and above
  - publish research results
  - report as content Alcohol & Drugs, Campus Involvement, Consumer Skills for Educational System, General Orientation to Higher Education Problems, Understanding Connections of General Education Requirements, Understanding Professors
  - offer faculty/staff development programs
  - use academic affairs professionals, administrators, faculty with doctorates, student affairs staff, and master's level students to teach seminar

- Public four-year institutions are *less* likely than other types to:

  - require students to take seminar regardless of whether credit is offered
  - offer average class sizes in excess of 40 students

- Private four-year institutions are ***more*** likely than other types to:

  - use faculty to coordinate seminar
  - offer three semester hours credit for seminar
  - count seminar as curriculum requirement
  - require students to take seminar
  - offer average class size less than 20 students
  - have seminar report to academic affairs
  - report sophomore return rate greater than 86%

- report as content Group Building, Introduction to Instructor's Discipline, Introduction to Liberal Arts, Leadership, Relationships, Spirituality, and Writing
- use doctoral students to teach seminar

- Private four-year institutions are ***less*** likely than other types to:
  - use student affairs to coordinate seminar
  - offer seminar for one quarter
  - offer seminar every term
  - have seminar report to academic college/department
  - report as content Career Planning, Consumer Skills for Educational System, General Orientation to Higher Education Problems, Managing Test Anxiety

- Two-year institutions are ***more*** likely than other types to:
  - use student affairs to coordinate seminar
  - offer seminar for one quarter
  - offer seminar for one semester hour or other credit
  - offer seminar every term
  - have seminar report to student affairs
  - report low sophomore return rate of seminar participants (less than 60%)
  - use as content Career Planning and Managing Test Anxiety

- Two-year institutions are ***less*** likely than other types to:
  - use academic affairs to coordinate seminar
  - offer seminar for one semester in length
  - offer seminar for two and three semester hours credit
  - enroll 50 or less students in seminar
  - have seminar report to academic affairs
  - report research results available
  - use as content Alcohol and Drugs, Campus Involvement, Group Building, Introduction to Liberal Arts, Leadership, Relationships, Spirituality, Understanding Connections of General Education Requirements, and Understanding Professors
  - offer faculty/staff development program
  - use academic affairs professionals, faculty with doctorates, doctoral level students and master's level students to teach seminar.

Analyses by Size of Institution

- Institutions enrolling less than 1,000 students are ***more*** likely than other sized institutions to:

  - offer seminar on non-credit basis
  - count seminar as curriculum requirement
  - require students to take seminar
  - offer only 1-2 sections of seminar each term
  - report total enrollment of 50 students or less
  - report average class size of less than 20 students
  - have seminar report to academic affairs
  - report budget less than $25,000
  - use as content Spirituality

- Institutions enrolling less than 1,000 students are ***less*** likely than other sized institutions to:

  - offer seminar for one semester hour credit and for quarter hours credit
  - offer seminar each term
  - have seminar report to academic college/department
  - report research results available
  - use as content Career Planning and Consumer Skills for the Educational System
  - offer faculty-staff development programs

- Institutions enrolling more than 10,000 students are ***more*** likely than other sized institutions to:

  - offer seminar for quarter hours credit, for three semester hours credit, and for two semester hours credit.
  - offer credit for seminar
  - offer ten or more sections each term
  - report budget of $25,000 or more
  - report research results available
  - report as content Consumer Skills for the Educational System

- Institutions enrolling more than 10,000 students are ***less*** likely than other sized institutions to:

  - count seminar as curriculum requirement
  - require students to take seminar
  - report total enrollment in seminar of 50 students or less
  - report average class size of less than 20 or more than 40 students
  - have seminar report to academic affairs
  - report as content Spirituality

CONCLUSIONS

Freshman seminars are newly emerging on a widespread basis on the American higher education scene. Two-thirds of institutions responding to the national survey reported that a freshman seminar is offered. Over 1,100 institutions provided survey information descriptive of the seminar program.

The seminar is typically taught for one full academic term, and the vast majority of seminars are offered for credit. Most programs assign letter grades and do not require freshmen to take the course.

Responsibility for the seminar generally resides with academic affairs and nearly all institutions devote minimal funding to the course. Only a minority of institutions regularly conduct research on seminar outcomes.

Most respondents to the survey seemed to be describing an orientation seminar when they identified seminar content. A broad range of topics was reported covered in seminars but there was striking content similarity as many of the same topics were identified by a majority of respondents. These seminars seem generally designed to help students improve academic performance.

Almost half of campuses offering the seminar also offer a faculty/staff development program related to the seminar. Most of these institutions require persons teaching the course to attend the faculty/staff development program. Instructors for seminars are drawn from a variety of campus personnel including faculty, administrators, and students. However, instructors typically are faculty or academic affairs professionals.

Seminar descriptions, course content, and instructor training vary across institutional types. For example, four-year public institutions are more likely to offer the seminar for elective credit towards a degree and to publish research. Freshman seminars are more likely to report to student affairs and to use student affairs professionals to teach and coordinate the seminars in two-year institutions. In contrast, four-year private institutions are more likely to use faculty to coordinate the seminar and are more likely to require students to take the seminar.

Course content varies across institutional types. For example, two-year institutions offer more concrete, pragmatic content such as Career Planning and Managing Test Anxiety; whereas four-year institutions (both public and private) offer more abstract, theoretical content such as Spirituality and appreciation of higher education.

In order to train instructors who teach freshman seminars, public four-year institutions are more likely to offer faculty/staff development programs. Four-year private institutions are more likely to use doctoral students to teach the seminars.

Seminar descriptions, course content, and instructor training also vary by size of institution. For example, institutions enrolling less than 1,000 students are more likely to offer the seminar on a non-credit basis and to require students to take the seminar. On the other hand, institutions enrolling more than 10,000 students are more likely to report research results and to provide a larger budget for the seminar program.

Only minor variations occur in course content. Small institutions are more apt to use Spirituality as a topic while large institutions are more apt to use Consumer Skills for the Educational System.

Similar to course content, minimal variations occur with faculty/staff development. Small institutions are less likely than larger types to offer faculty/staff development programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this first national survey of freshman seminars, the findings suggest the following recommendations:

1. Institutions should be encouraged to evaluate the success of freshman seminar programs on their campuses. In particular, data should be collected to show the effect of the seminar on sophomore return rates and graduation rates.

2. Individual campuses should consider devoting more financial and personnel resources to seminar programs. Freshman seminars offer an effective way to "front load" resources.

3. More campuses should offer faculty/staff development programs as a way of preparing instructors to teach freshman seminars. Requiring seminar instructors to participate in such development programs is a heavily endorsed practice.

4. Institutional researchers should be encouraged to study a number of issues concerning freshman seminars to learn the most effective methodologies of offering seminars. For example,

   - ✓ What is the ideal length of a seminar to enhance student learning?
   - ✓ Should seminars be offered for credit, and if so, how much?
   - ✓ What is the effect on student learning and class participation of assigning letter grades or using pass-fail grading schemes?
   - ✓ What is the optimal class size for freshman seminars?
   - ✓ Are seminars that are offered during the student's second term of the freshman year as effective as those taken during term of entry?
   - ✓ What are the characteristics of an ideal seminar instructor?
   - ✓ What seminar topics are associated with positive outcomes?

5. Future national surveys should be conducted in order to monitor the continued development of the freshman seminar movement.

6. Future surveys should clarify the distinction between seminar typologies. There is evidence that the current survey may have only generated responses from seminars that are defined as orientation or survival seminars. Seminars with more academic content especially need to be defined and described.

Reference

Murphy, R. O. (1989). Freshman year enhancement in American higher education. *Journal of The Freshman Year Experience, 1*(2), 91-100.

About the Authors

Paul P. Fidler received a Doctorate in Higher Education Administration from Florida State University and since that time has held numerous administrative positions at the University of South Carolina. He currently serves in the dual role of Director of Research, Grant One Planning in the Division of Student Affairs and as Associate Professor of Higher Education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policies. Since 1973, Dr. Fidler has served as evaluator of University 101, the freshman seminar at the University of South Carolina. Since its inception in 1983, he has chaired the university-wide retention committee. He serves as an advisor to Omicron Delta Kappa, a national leadership honorary society, and to Delta Tau Delta social fraternity. Dr. Fidler is on the Advisory Board for the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience.

Dorothy S. Fidler received a Doctorate in Experimental Psychology from the University of South Carolina where she served during the early 1980s as Director of the Mature Students Program for adult undergraduate students. She currently is the Co-Director of the National Resource Center for The Freshman Year Experience and edits the Center's journal, newsletter, and monograph series. She is an adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology and in Higher Education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policies. She also serves as a Research Associate in the Division of Continuing Education where she analyzes enrollment data on adult students versus traditional-aged students.

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